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News Release



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For Release: August 18, 2006

SERVICE DENIES PETITION TO LIST 16 INSECT SPECIES UNDER ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service announced today that a petition to list 16 insects in the Algodones Dunes area of southern California under the Endangered Species Act does not contain substantial information to warrant adding the species to the Federal list of threatened and endangered species. The negative finding on the petition was published in the Federal Register on August 18, 2006.

The petition to list the insects was submitted to the Service by the Center for Biological Diversity, Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility and the Sierra Club. Under the Endangered Species Act, the Service is required to review the petition and determine whether it contains substantial information to warrant listing in a process known as a 90-day finding.

The 16 insect species include two sand wasps, two bees, one vespid, two velvet ants, three jewel beetles, two scarab beetles and four subspecies of weevils. The petitioners claimed these 16 insect species are endemic to the Algodones Dunes system and are habitat specialists with restricted geographic ranges, making them more prone to extinction.

The Service was not able to consider the vespid or the four subspecies of weevil for listing because they are not recognized as accepted insect taxons. While the other 11 species in the petition are accepted taxons eligible for protection, the petition provided insufficient information on the distribution, range, habitat use, abundance, and population trends for these insect species. A review of information in the Service's files also did not substantiate the need for listing.

The petitioners also claimed that these 16 species are subject to historic, ongoing, and future habitat disturbance from heavy off-road vehicle use at the Algodones Dunes that both modifies and destroys their habitat and can kill individuals. However, the petition did not show any direct or substantial evidence that off-road vehicle use specifically threatens these insect species in the Algodones Dunes ecosystem. There was no information to show that habitat for the insect species in the petition will be modified or destroyed or that their ranges will be curtailed.

After this review and evaluation, the Service finds that the petition does not present substantial scientific or commercial information to demonstrate that listing the 16 insect species of the Algodones Dunes area as threatened or endangered is warranted at this time.

Copies of this petition finding are available on the Internet at <http://carlsbad.fws.gov> or by contacting the Carlsbad Fish and Wildlife Office at 760/431-9440.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the principal Federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting and enhancing fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Service manages the 95-million-acre National Wildlife Refuge System, which encompasses 545 national wildlife refuges, thousands of small wetlands and other special management areas. It also operates 69 national fish hatcheries, 64 fishery resources offices and 81 ecological services field stations. The agency enforces federal wildlife laws, administers the Endangered Species Act, manages migratory bird populations, restores nationally significant fisheries, conserves and restores wildlife habitat such as wetlands, and helps foreign and Native American tribal governments with their conservation efforts. It also oversees the Federal Assistance program, which distributes hundreds of millions of dollars in excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment to state fish and wildlife agencies.

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